

# ECSTASY

### ▼ What Is Ecstasy?

Ecstasy is the street name for methylene-dioxymethamphetamine (MDMA), a chemical substance that combines methamphetamines with hallucinogenic properties. Ecstasy is both a stimulant and a hallucinogen, and its effects are potentially life-threatening. Ecstasy was banned in 1985, and is currently classified as a Schedule 1 substance. It is also known as X-TC, Adam, Clarity, and Lover's Speed.

Ecstasy, like all club drugs, is a combination of other illicit drugs. Because many different recipes are used to make Ecstasy, the risk of death and permanent brain damage are heightened when some substances are combined. It is available in tablet, capsule, or powder form; some manufacturers of the drug package it in capsules or generic tablets to imitate prescription drugs. The average cost is between \$7 and \$30 per pill.

Among the variations of the drug is a new substance, Herbal Ecstasy, that is composed of ephedrine (ma huang) or pseudoephedrine and caffeine from the kola nut. Sold in tablet form, this drug may cause permanent brain damage and death.

### ▼ Psychological Effects

Though an Ecstasy high can last from six to 24 hours, the average "trip" lasts about three to four hours. The drug can be detected in the urine for up to four days after last used. At moderate doses, Ecstasy can cause euphoria, feelings of well-being, feelings of enhanced mental or emotional clarity, anxiety, and paranoia, which can occur weeks after it is taken. Heavier doses can cause hallucinations, sensations of lightness and floating, depression, paranoid thinking, and violent, irrational behavior.

### ▼ Physical Effects

Physical reactions can include the following: loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, blurred vision, increased heart rate and blood pressure, muscle tension, faintness, chills, sweating, tremors, reduced appetite, insomnia, convulsions, loss of control over voluntary body movements, tremors, reduced appetite, kidney failure, heart attack, stroke, seizure, and malignant hyperthermia (increase in body temperature). Some reactions have been reported to persist from one to 14 days after taking Ecstasy. Individuals who are pregnant, have a heart condition, are epileptic, or have high blood pressure are at high risk of adverse reactions. In addition, users are at particular risk of heat exhaustion and dehydration with physical exertion, particularly when Ecstasy is taken in a dance-party setting. A number of deaths have occurred because users don't drink enough water and become overheated. Because Ecstasy alters serotonin levels in the brain, researchers have found that chronic use can lead to long-term or permanent damage to those parts of the brain critical to thought, memory, and pleasure.

## ▼ Is Herbal Ecstasy a Safe, Natural Alternative?

No. Although not currently classified as a controlled substance, Herbal Ecstasy is a drug composed of ephedrine (ma huang) or pseudoephedrine and caffeine (kola nut), stimulants that closely simulate the effects of Ecstasy. Sold in tablet form, Herbal Ecstasy is known as Cloud 9, Herbal Bliss, Ritual Spirit, Herbal X, GWM, Rave Energy, Ultimate Xphoria, and X. There is no quality control over the manufacture of these products, and problems arise because the amounts of ephedrine and caffeine in the pills vary widely. Over 800 reports of adverse reactions such as high blood pressure, seizures, heart attacks, strokes, and death have been reported to federal authorities. Because of these reactions, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is considering placing restrictions on the drug.

### Additional Information

- The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information's home page has information on Ecstasy and other substances of abuse. <http://www.health.org>
- The National Institute on Drug Abuse has national statistics and the latest research findings available. " <http://www.drugabuse.gov>
- The Partnership for a Drug-Free America has a drug database to help parents identify specific drugs, their effects, and drug paraphernalia. <http://www.drugfreeamerica.org>



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Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse